The Pan-Handle Advocate
Piper City, Ford County, Illinois, Friday, August 12, 1887

Terrible Disaster

The Horror of the age

The Most Appalling Disaster in the Nation's History

The Niagara Falls Excursion Crushes through a Culvert

Nine Cars in a Mass of Ruins

About 100 Dead and More Dying

Nearly 150 Seriously Wounded

One of the Most Heartrending Scenes Ever Witnessed

Terrible Cries and Shrieks of Distress Heard in the Midst of a Shapeless Mass of Splintered Wood and Twisted and Broken Iron

Startling Scenes at every Turn

Sickening, Gory Spectacles Everywhere - Suicides

Fire, Lighting, Thunder, Rain, and the Blackest of Darkness Added to the Awful Horror of the Situation

Miraculous Escapes. Good Samaritans of Piper City and Chatsworth.

Accounts of Survivors, Etc.

THE CRASH:

Friday, 7 PM: -As the Niagara Falls excursion train was coming from Chatsworth to this place Wednesday night, at about 11:50 pm, , and was on the down grade just west of the county line in Livingston county, and about three miles from here the train crushed through a burned culvert and caused the greatest disaster in modern times, killing nearly one hundred people and wounding about one hundred more. The train was a "double-header" and consisted of a baggage car, a special car, five coaches, two chair cars, and six sleepers.

The entire train, except the sleepers, loaded with human freight, was mashed to a shapeless wreck. The bridge over this culvert was an ordinary structure of wood, about fourteen feet long, and the hot weather of past weeks had made it dry as tinder.

Wednesday night the supports caught fire and slowly burned until the entire bridge rested on the charred remnants of the timbers.

When the train came thundering down there was nothing to alert the head engineer that the bridge was a death trap until he was so close to it it was impossible to stop, he hesitated a moment but the speed of the train was not slackened. It had slowly steamed out of Chatsworth at 11:40 o'clock, but striking a gentle down grade the throttle was pulled out and the train rushed along at a ride of 35 miles an hour.

The first engine of the train crossed over the bridge and ran on east up the track for some distance, It being up grade after leaving the

bridge. In its course the hind trucks of the tender became derailed and broke loose from both engines.

When the first engine struck the bridge there was a crackling of timbers and the bridge gave away. This engine was not thrown from the track, but continued on its way with a derailed tender as stated. The next engine leaped the chasm. Its tender was stripped of its trucks and landed one hundred feet east of the bridge, where it was thrown into the ditch north of the tracks and the engine was dumped into the ditch on the south side of the track opposite. As soon as the second engine crossed the culvert the other cars followed, and, leaving their trucks in its ditch, were piled and mashed together like kindling wood. The scenes of horror and confusion that followed were frightful. There were about seven hundred people on the train and of these fully one-half were in the coaches that now lay in a huge mass. Seven cars filled with dead and dying people were jammed into a space of two cars length. The special car of General Superintendent Armstrong was thrown across the track and the trucks knocked from under it. The occupants had a miraculous escape. Mr. Armstrong was thrown out of the car and escaped with a minor scratch. General Passenger and Ticket Agent H.D. Gould's family and Train Dispatcher Parker's wife, all of Peoria, were occupants of the special car and escaped with slight bruises. David Sutherland was the engineer of the leading engine. He is unhurt. Edward McClintock, of Peoria, engineer of No. 13, was instantly killed, his head and breast being smashed to a pulp. His fireman, Axel Applegreen, jumped from the engine and is uninjured. McClintock leaves a wife and three children.

THE CRUSHED CARS

The 7 cars behind the special coach were demolished. The coaches were telescoped in the most horrible manner, and the occupants were simply crushed and mangled almost out of all semblance to human beings. Thirty-nine ladies were taken out from the end of the cars. When the crash came they were swept off their seats by the rear car bursting in on them and crushed to death in the further end of the car. The accident occurred at 11:49 P.M. When McClintock's body was taken out it was found that his watch had stopped at that hour.

The fireman of the head engine, Joe Rodgers, accompanied by Axle Applegreen, the fireman of the second engine, ran the first engine without a tender, almost immediately to Piper City for assistance. On arrival the fire alarm was given and soon the track was covered with people going to the scene of the disaster. The terrible news was telegraphed all along the line and Chatsworth people were soon on the grounds. Surgeons from both places were taken on hand cars and arrived among the first. The ladies of both places were soon busy preparing places for the wounded and in short order Chatsworth and Piper looked like immense hospitals. On arriving at the wreck the sight was most appalling. The charred and blackened remains of the bridge, which was still burning, received the first attention. None of the cars caught fire, otherwise he horrors of a holocaust would have been added to an already frightful disaster. Attention was then turned to the shrieking inmates of the wrecked cars.

Such was the awful momentum of the train that three of the coaches were not only telescoped, but piled on top of each other. The other cars had rolled off the track after telescoping. Fourteen trucks were piled upon the east side of the culvert. In the midst of this awful mass of broken cars hundreds of human beings were entombed. One woman with her baby in her arms was thrown half the length of the car and killed. The baby was not injured. Four colored women sitting together were crushed to a pulp. They were from Peoria. Conductor Stillwell escaped with a few injuries about the body.

BREAKING OUT IN THE DARKNESS

As fast as possible the work of release was prosecuted, but about 2:30 o'clock it began

to rain and the horror of the of the night was complete. The black darkness, which was faintly illuminated by lanterns and pierced by the awful yells and groans of the dying, injured, and imprisoned, was now joined by the elements, and the pouring rain, lightning, and the roar of thunder made a scene that would appall the bravest heart. One young man who was taken out with both legs broken was carried to a cornfield near by and laid down. He yelled with pain for a time but an hour later it was found that he had killed himself by blowing his brains out. The terrible excitement and pain had probably driven him crazy.

REMOVING THE DEAD

After the wounded had all been handed out of the cars and were being cared for as well as possible the work of removing the dead began. When commenced it looked like a hopeless undertaking, but determined men did not look at the wreck in that way, and commenced to take everything in pieces, in the three telescoped cars. In the way were great iron bars bent and wrenched out of shape, with planks ten inches thick and heavily ironed wedged in solid, and in the midst of this mass a lamp, with chimney, globe, etc., uninjured, and bottles of medicine and jars of fruit not harmed the least. But the horrible part was yet to come. As they progressed they came across a woman, her head gone, and limbs broken, then several more men and women, one man mashed flat every bone broken and not over three inches from his breast to his back. Here someone would pick up a valise and uncover an arm or leg without a body, and over there some one would pick up a piece of linen to hand down to the nurses and when lifted up from the wreck discover a little child, crushed to a jelly. Such sights were common and made the braves shudder. In one place was a man's face, minus a head and in another a man standing up without a head, while several heads of women were found and only with difficulty identified with their own bodies, and ghastly bodies of women and men hung out of windows through which they were crushed or attempted to jump, stark and lifeless. In the midst of all this horrible mixture of legs, heads, arms, and mutilated bodies were to be seen frail pieces of glass and wood as good as they ever were, and in one car a small clock, keeping time as regular as though just wound. The agonizing scenes which followed all this as husband sought for wife, or wife for husband, father or mother for children, or children were wildly clamoring for parents, while brothers, sisters, relatives and friends kept up with the same frantic search, with their lost in many cases mutilated beyond recognition, begger description. The piercing shrieks of terror stricken people suddenly bereft of those most dear to them, and under such awful circumstances, mingled with the heartrending groans of the wounded and dying sent out into the blackness of darkness prevailing everywhere, none but a stone heart could even witness. No pen is able to describe the scene, and to do so would require human flesh for parchment, a flame of fire for a pen, and human blood for ink. Those who were there that night saw a sight which will cause a startled, ghastly look to come to their face whenever mentioned. People from all parts of Illinois and Indiana have viewed the remains, but none can guess the awful horrors of Wednesday night, August 10th. When you can paint the sight of a great mass of wreckage, hear the groans of the seriously wounded, the shrieks of those hurt less, the sound of axes, prayers for death, calls for water, sparks flying all over the wreck, one car partly in flames, a pistol shot, as some one commits suicide and others begging for the same weapon, person staggering in every direction from the wreck, only to die, the crunching of bones and trickling of warm blood and gore, -- when you can paint all this on your imagination, then, and not till then, will you have the faintest idea of this great catastrophe.

The citizens of Piper City deserve a large amount of credit for the work they did in removing and caring for the wounded and dead at the wreck and the doctoring of the wounded when they reached town. Our two

physicians were the first on the scene and placed everyone in an easy a position as possible and here the next day they were busy every minute until so exhausted that they could go no farther. The Hall, hotel, and numerous private dwellings were turned into hospitals and food and medicines procured for the sufferers as soon as possible. Chatsworth and her people were not behind. We noticed quite a number of prominent ladies from that place attending the wounded on the ground in the drenching rain and they did heroic work. Although it was claimed by some, and was possibly true, that there were some instances of villains robbing the dead and living, yet, when some unfortunate offered hundreds of dollars for immediate relief the honest answer invariably was "We are not working for money, but will assist you as soon as possible." Such remarks as these redeemed man's faith in man and made the ruffianly robber blacker than the clouds that covered the heavens at that time.

THE DEAD

The following is a list of the dead made out to the date so far as is or can be ascertained. All the dead and part of the wounded have been removed and the balance are tenderly cared for. Probably there are slight modifications and quite a number of dead not identified that are not included, besides bodies removed not listed:

R. E. Strachan, Peoria.
Miss Stephens and father.
Mike Regan, Binghamton, N. Y.
William Craig, Cuba, Ill.
Henry Hicken, Pekin, Ill.
Noah Havermale, Canton, Ill.
M. Smith, Metamora, Ill.
J. S. Jaker, Breed's Station, Ill.
Mrs. Zimmerman, Peoria.
Rosa and Maggie Murphy and mother, Peoria.
Miss Maggie Malvow, Peoria.
Miss Neal, Mossville, Ill.
Emiline Carrithers, Evans, Ill.
Jess Meek, Eureka, Ill.
Sherman, Brimfield, Ill.
May Laws.
McClintock, engineer, Peoria.
Elizabeth Cress, Washington, Ill.
Mrs. E. D. Stoddard, West Point, Iowa.
Pearl French, Peoria.
W. H. Potter, Bushnell, Ill.
Mrs. J. M. Clay, Eureka, Ill.
J. D. Richards.
Mrs Breeze, Peoria.
Mrs. W. Garretsen, Peoria.
W. V. Trovillo, Abington.
E. F. Adams, Fairbury.
W. H. Lott, Ellwood.
Addie Webster, Peoria.
Mrs. William Allen, Peoria.
Mr. W. Valejo, Peoria.
Mrs. H. B. McClure and daughter, Peoria.
Mrs. Miller, Peoria.
Mr. Wright, Peoria.
Mrs. Jas. Dale, Peoria.
Mrs. Wm. Ball and daughter, Peoria.
Mr. F. B. Welennett, Peoria.
Mr. E. Godell and son, Galesburg.
Dr. Wm. Collins, Galesburg.
J. Body.
Mrs. John Murphy, Peoria.
Henry Siegelson, Keokuk, Ia.
Oney Spaith, Green Valley, Il.
John A. Moore, Jacksonville, Ill.
J. D. McFadden, Peoria.
Capt. Ahlke.
A. Martin, Bloomington.
J. A. Green, Breed's Station.
Mrs. Dr. Duckett, Forrest.
Mrs. Croswell, Peoria.
Minnie Alter, West Point, Ia.
Mrs. Alter, West Point, Ia.
Eva Walter, West Point, Ia.
Mrs. Snedaker, Abington, Ill.
R. E. Strachan, Peoria.
Mrs. Stephens, Peoria.
John Zeitler, Pekin.
Mrs. Hill, Berwick, Ill.
T. R. Hill, Berwick.
W. Patterson, Wyoming, Ill.
Mrs. M. Smith, Metamora.
--Neal, 2 year old child, Peoria.
E. A. Adams, Blackstone, Ill.
C. Farmer, Chenoa.
___M'Donald.
G. F. Harrley, Bushnell, Ill.

Jess Sherman, Brimfield, Ill.
C. Van Lieu, Galesburg.
Miss Kelly, Peoria.
__Hill, infant, Berwick.
Mrs. Valentine, Peoria.
Mrs. Blandin, Harkers Corner, Ill.
Martin Corsell, Washington.
Mrs. James Deal, Peoria.
Millard Fillmore, Pontiac.
Mrs. Hicks of Chillicothe, Ill.
Mrs. Maggie Powers, Peoria.
George Press, Washington.
P. Sackenreuther, Pekin.
And at least five more whose bodies have not been identified.

THE WOUNDED

Following is a list of the wounded at Piper City. Several have died and a number removed:

Miss Forbes, Washington, Ill., Serious.
Geo. A. Smith, Peoria.
E. D. Stoddard and son, West Point.
Edward Brown, Breeds, Ill.
J. I. Hicks, Chillicothe, Ill.
Phena Frahm, Peoria.
D. C. Auringer, Detroit, Mich.
Mrs. S. M. Smith, Galesburg.
Mrs. Strachan, Syracuse, N. Y.
Ida B. Blandin, Bona, Ill.
Harry Scheitlin, Abingdon, Ill.
Mrs. Mollie Dyer, Abingdon, Ill.
Marian Coon, Peoria, slight.
Miss Pearl Adams, Peoria, serious.
B. F. Ayers and wife, Morton, Ill. Both with badly broken bones.
E. E. Putney, Peoria. Leg hurt.
C. W. Webster, Peoria. Leg broken.
Wm. Ulrich, Peoria, Thigh hurt.
G. H. Cottermale, La Harpe, Ill. Ankle broken and head bruised.
L. E. Rotterman, Peoria. Bruised.
W. B. McDonough, Macomb, Ill. Broken leg and bruised.
M. F. McDonna, Hallock, Ill. Serious.
T. Lawrence, Colchester, Ill. Badly hurt.
G. R. Stillwell, Bippus, Ind. Arm broken.
Robert Reed, Astoria, Ill. Internal injuries.
Edw. Compton, Peoria. Slight.
W. R. Kirchoff, Peoria. Slight.
Elsie Ulrich, Peoria, Slight.
Mrs. W. A. Zindel, Peoria. Slight.
Mrs. Jas. Cording, Risk, Ill. Slight.
Three Turks from Assyria.
Beeter Muran. Slight.
Joseph Muran. Slight.
Antonia Lahert. Bad.
Robert Zimmerman, druggist, Peoria and his wife. The former bruised about the face and body, and the latter with a dislocated shoulder, and bruises on head and body. Both will recover.
Miss Mary Mories of Peoria. Left leg and thigh crushed. Will recover.
Theodore Godel, Peoria. Hurt on head and feet. Will recover.
Mrs. R. H. Clark, Rootstown, Ohio. Right leg mangled, left leg broken below the knee and cuts about the head and face. She will probably die.
E. F. French, Peoria. Leg bruised and cuts about the head and face.
Elton Waters, Peoria. Hip fractured and bruised.
Mrs. Laws and daughter Sarah of Eureka, Ill. Both badly cut but will recover.
H. B. Lawrence, Burlington, Ia. Hurt but will recover.
C. H. Carter Jr., Burlington, Ia. Right foot and knee mashed and cuts on the head. Will recover.
John McMaster of Peoria. Left leg and back hurt. Will recover.
J. W. Stearns, Green Valley, Ill. Left leg cut off at knee and hurt in stomach. Recovery doubtful.
John Steen, Wan's Grove, Ill. Hurt in the spine. Will probably die.
Miss Ann Kellogg, Tazewell Co., Ill. Right ankle broken and bruised about the head and face. Will recover.
Mrs. Dr. A. J. Welch, Peoria. Cut and bruised but will recover.
Mrs. W. H. Lott, Elmwood, Ill. Badly cut and bruised but will recover.
Mrs. Isaac Bodley, Morrison, Ill. Bruised internally. Recovery very doubtful.

The following is the list of seriously wounded as was reported from Chatsworth

E. W. Parker and wife, Peoria. Wounded in head and limbs.
Mrs. Emma Regou and little son, Peoria. Slightly injured.
H. L. Logden, Graymont, Ill. Head and foot hurt.
John Fry, Peoria. Leg broke and back injured.
Mrs. Edith Chellew, Glassford, Ill. One leg broken, ankle dislocated and bruised.
Mr. N. Chellew, Glassford, Ill. Hip dislocated and bruised.
G. A. Scott, Toulon, Ill. Injured.
Florence Boucher, Bayard, Ia. Arm hurt.
Sophia Pauline, Peoria. Head hurt.
D. W. Young, West Jersey, Ill. Injured.
C. W. Swand, West Jersey, foot and shoulder hurt.
Pat Brady, Gilman, Ill. Foot and head injured.
B. M. Judd, Chatsworth, Ill. Injured badly but will recover.
T. Godel, Peoria. Legs and head hurt.
T. Trimm, Partridge, Ill. Arms, leg and hip injured.
Miss Julia Valdejo, Peoria. Seriously injured internally.
Mrs. Lettie Neal, Mossville, Ill. Arm and leg broken.
Jotham Neal, Mossville, Ill. Severely but not seriously bruised.
Dr. Hazen, Fort Madison, Iowa, shoulder dislocated.
Mrs. Hazen, Fort Madison, Iowa. Bruised.
Miss K. G. Shorn, Risk, Ia. Internally injured.
H. H. Bond, Colchester, Ill. Internally injured and cut.
Miss Abbie Edmunds, Disco, Ill. Ankle injured.
Mrs. Thomas McAvoy, Peoria. Internally hurt.
Miss Mary Morris, Peoria. Bruised and sprained.
Mrs. J. W. Grant, Peoria. Injured internally.
E. R. French, Peoria. Hips and body bruised.

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